

Lessons Learned from Past Tours & Frequently Asked Questions

Travel to the Departure Point

You are responsible for getting to our meeting point in Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris by 0700 hours (AM) on Friday, 22 May 2009. The formal portion of the tour will end on the morning of Wednesday 3 June when most will return to Canada. You can arrive earlier and stay longer, but you must be at our meeting point on 22 May. Check with Air France, Air Canada for flights and times.

Luggage

We ask you to restrict your luggage to a maximum of two bags and/or backpack. We will be 7 in each van so the luggage can add up quickly. Make sure you bring a "day pack" or shoulder knapsack for use while in the field. We used to insist on one bag but ran into more severely enforced weight limits in past years. Check their website of our airline to get the detail on their baggage limits.

Clothing & Shoes

This is a battlefield tour so dress accordingly. Comfortable clothes that stand up to wear and a hat to ward off the sun are essential. You will need sturdy comfortable shoes or hiking boots. Shorts and short-sleeved shirts will be appropriate on most days, but bring a rain jacket and a sweater; this is northern Europe, after all!

Formal Dress

We are hoping to participate in the nightly ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres on 22 May. Suits and dresses are not required, but it is not considered good 'form' to wear jeans or shorts.

What to Bring

The following items are suggestions based on the experience of students on previous tours:

- A journal or diary to record your impressions of events.
- A camera and extra batteries for your camera - just in case. You might think about bringing an extra memory disk/stick/pod as well
- A valid passport. Remember, if your passport will remain valid for less than six months from 20 May 2009, you can be refused entry into a foreign country. Get your passport updated. NEVER leave your passport unattended in a hotel room or anywhere else.
- Option: A battery-operated, hand-held tape recorder with extra batteries. Some participants have recorded their impressions, and sometimes even the recollections of eyewitness participants, directly onto a tape.

- An **alarm clock** with extra batteries
- Note that unless you have an outlet adapter and a power converter, many appliances (e.g., hairdryers, irons, or electric razors) won't work in Europe.
- Foreign currency. Purchase some Euros before you leave Canada to tide you over for minor expenses. In the larger centres we will be visiting there are plenty of currency exchange counters, and bank machines (ATM) are everywhere. (Service charges will apply) In rural France, we will be nowhere near banks, so keep some cash handy. Bring a money belt or waist pouch for added security. Travellers' cheques are very difficult to exchange; only banks that specialize in foreign currency will accept them.
- Pack light. It's amazing what you do not use. There is an old adage "Take half as much clothes as you think you'll need and twice as much money"
- Flags and pins. Try to obtain small Canadian flags and flag pins free of charge from the office of your local Member of Parliament. These will come in very handy during the trip and you'll be glad you brought them.

Money

Bankcards work in European machines and ATMs, which are almost as ubiquitous as they are in Canada. Travellers' cheques are safe, but they are often refused in the small towns we will be visiting. You will be able to change them in some banks and currency offices, but these all close at lunchtime, often the only time available. You are responsible for your meals etc. so budget accordingly.

Laundry

There will be no laundry facilities in our hotels. In hotels, light shirts and underwear could be washed in the sink and dried overnight but once we get to the Moulin Morin in Bayeux, washers, dryers and clotheslines are on site. The washers are funky Euro-machines however so read instructions carefully (don't put soap into dryer vent like some nameless student on tours past).

Food

France is not in North America. We thought we should mention this straight out, as some students in the past have been surprised that they could not get their usual food choices, although "McDo" has penetrated most parts of Europe. Restaurants and hotels can cater to most desires so there should be no problem. French food is outstanding - try and enjoy it. While we are at the Moulin Morin you will be in self catering apartments and responsible for preparing your meals. (Or you can go into Bayeux)

Insurance

The tour does not provide medical insurance for you. If you wish to have coverage, arrange it beforehand. Check with your university as you may have some sort of coverage included in your tuition.

Roommate Rotation

In the hotels students will be billeted two to a room. Experience, however, has shown us the importance of changing roommates from time to time. We will rotate roommates twice during the tour to encourage familiarity and avoid "cliquism."

Pre-Tour Study

You have been sent a list of presentation topics and suggested pre-tour readings, which accompany the presentation topics, should be your guide. Experience teaches that you will do little pre-tour study that isn't directly related to your presentation topic, but hope springs eternal! The most important books are Fields of Fire, and The Canadian Battlefields in Normandy: A Visitors Guide, both written by Terry Copp. They give a good background and discuss many of sites we will visit. You should also consult John A. English, The Canadian Army in the Normandy Campaign: A Study of Failure in High Command and Carlo D'Este's Decision in Normandy, which is the most interesting general study of the campaign. George Blackburn's book The Guns of Normandy gives a very good account of what it was like to be on the ground in Normandy during the summer. **The website will also have a list of readings.**

Student Cards

You should get yourself an International Student Identity Card (ISIC). It will permit reduced fares for transportation, and reduced fees for entry into many events. The tour covers all the entry fees for our scheduled sites, but it will come in handy when you are on your own.